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CIA-Stanford rumors baffle Kennedy

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Allegations of increased CIA activities on the Stanford campus are "so vague that I don't know what in the world I could do about it," university President Donald Kennedy said Wednesday.

Mechanical engineering Professor Bernard Roth earlier this week said the CIA "subtly" tried to recruit him and other Stanford faculty members. Roth said he believes CIA activities on campus have increased in recent months.

"I would be disturbed if I thought Stanford faculty had in fact been recruited for secondary recruitment (of foreign students for CIA work) or (CIA) program activities on campus," Kennedy said.

Kennedy said the federal government recently has shown stronger interest in "keeping track of general ideas," particularly in the area of technology. He said he "wouldn't be surprised" if the new government interest in technology is coupled with an increase in covert activities on campus.

However, he saw Roth's statements as conveying only a "vague impression — I don't know what to make of it."

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Kennedy said Roth has not discussed the CIA-recruitment issue with him.

Kennedy said he has not ruled out "updating" a 1978 decision by past President Richard Lyman concerning guidelines on CIA activities on campus.

In the late 1970s, Harvard and several other universities adopted guidelines that would require faculty to report to the dean or university president any private consulting or recruitment agreements with the CIA.

Lyman rejected the guidelines, saying they "looked good on paper but are unenforceable." He said the university could not tell its faculty "that its members may not do work for the CIA, General Motors, the United Farm Workers, or any other group that the individual believes is relevant to his professional interests."

Lyman offered the Faculty Senate, a body representing the university's faculty and which helps set university policy, an opportunity to discuss the issue, but the group declined.

Kennedy said he considers "any policy on this (CIA recruitment on campus) open to updating." He said, however, that he has heard "nothing from Roth that persuades me (that the issue of guidelines) ought to be tangled with."

The Faculty Senate meets today, and Kennedy said he planned to discuss a related issue — that of recent State Department controls imposed on visiting scholars in an attempt to prevent transfer of high-technology information to communist nations.

Neither Kennedy, who is scheduled to deliver an address, nor Roth, who has an opportunity to ask questions from the floor, would say whether they planned to bring up the matter of CIA recruiting during the Faculty Senate meeting.

Roth, coincidentally, was to be visited this spring by a Russian robot expert.